

Is loving stalking?

Russian beauty Maria Sharapova accused a New Zealand journalist of "stalking" her Saturday after he asked if she spent time with Anna Kournikova and frequented a club for "hot Russians".

"You're the guy from New Zealand, huh?" Sharapova said, when she recognised the male journalist from this month's Auckland Classic. "Oh God, you're stalking me!" "It's not stalking if you love someone," the journalist said jokingly, to which Sharapova replied: "It can be slightly, trust me."

The 23-year-old also fended off the reporter's next question, asking whether there was a "hot Russians club where you get together".

"No. I didn't know I was part of it. But no," she said.



DHAKA SUNDAY JANUARY 16, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Tigers help paralytic

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh cricketers practising at the Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday were served a sobering reminder of life's hardships when they were visited by Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, a young man whose life has been blighted by paralysis.

A student of Comilla's Victoria College, Mizanur's limbs had become paralysed because of which he went to Madras's CMC Hospital. Following treatment, he got the feel back on his left hand but had to return without recovering fully due to a shortage of funds to pay his medical bills. Of the Tk 8 lakh needed to undergo treatment, Tk 640,000 have been collected through pleas on TV and newspapers.

He had gone to the national team's practice session to get help from the Tigers to raise the remaining amount.

Captain Shakib Al Hasan and his deputy Tamim Iqbal talked to him, asking the ill-fated Mizanur to contact again on January 19, when they would do what they can to help.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) and Tamim Iqbal (C) study a passionate plea of Mizanur Rahman, a university student fighting paralysis, at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

One club rule again?

MSC irked at CCDM decision

SPORTS REPORTER

The almost unobserved domestic cricket heated up for all the wrong reasons prior to today's titanic clash between traditional rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani in the Premier Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The excitement with the vital match suddenly took a back seat after CCDM (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis) took a surprising decision to increase the registration of foreign players from five to seven yesterday; a bad precedent no matter whether any club protested or not.

Following this controversial decision, Mohammedan called an emergency meeting where the majority members were against playing the match in protest of this decision but Hanif Bhuiyan, Mohammedan's cricket committee secretary, didn't fully dismiss the chance of taking part.

"Majority of our members were against playing the match because CCDM violated the bylaws. But anything can happen tonight. I talked with CCDM chairman (GS Hasan Tamim) and asked him not to field the sixth foreign player (Abahani's Rajat Bhatia). He assured me that he will try it. There is still a chance that we will play the match if they make the change," said Hanif.

"CCDM gave us a letter where they mentioned that

Mash just wants to play

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday declared that he would do all that is necessary to play the World Cup, although he is running against time and assessment.

"If I have to take 100 per cent risk, I am willing to take it," Mashrafe told the media after a practice session at the Academy ground.

The paceman ran for quite a while and did some big-hitting against spinners in the nets. It is clear that he is recovering and at a good pace, but since the 15-member World Cup squad will be announced within a day or two, it is certain that he will not be fit by that time.

"The physio will decide when I will start bowling. I'm following his direction, hopefully I will recover in time.

"I sat out for two months when my ankle was injured and after two

matches, everything was fine. There are practice matches before the World Cup and our training is almost like matches so I think the only thing to worry about is how soon I can start bowling," said Mashrafe.

With the tournament set to begin on February 19, Mashrafe has just over a month to be 'match-fit' though according to sources, the fitness report, released last evening, said that he would begin bowling in the first week of February.

"I am doing 80 per cent running and some sideways. It is not hurting that much and it is now a matter of time. Whatever the physio has told me to do in terms of cardio, I haven't feel bad with it," said the Narail Express who injured his knee during a Premier League match at BKSP last month.

But head coach Jamie Siddons believed that the key question was whether he would be fit for the first

game against India.

"At the moment he is nowhere near fit. Obviously the selectors will have to make a decision. There's no idea about what we will do but 3-4 days is not going to make any difference," said Siddons, also dropping the hint that Mashrafe could be picked in an unfit condition and if he doesn't recover in time, a replacement will be called up.

"Only if we conclude that he will be fit by the first match. If he's fit by the first match, otherwise no chance. So we have to weigh it up.

"My opinion is that we have to know if he will be fit by February 19. It is very difficult risking an injured player. But the rules are there. If he's injured before the first game, maybe the risk is minimised a little bit," added Siddons.

The 46-year-old Australian however admitted that it would be nearly impossible to replace Mashrafe, given his track

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP TALK

A wicket & a hat-trick

Ehsanul Haque was a compact batsman and in prime form ahead of the 2003 World Cup. Though the campaign wasn't the best, Ehsanul had a few good memories, which he shares with The Daily Star.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How did it feel when you heard that you would play the 2003 World Cup?

Ehsanul Haque (EH): World Cup is always different from every other tournament that you play.

I scored a lot of runs in the National League, around 997 runs, prior to the World Cup, and also performed well against West Indies in the home series. So I was confident that I would be in the squad. Then again it was the World Cup, I felt great.

DSS: How excited were you?

EH: I was very excited to be a part of the World Cup team. Then again I also felt the responsibilities I had on my shoulder as a batsman, as it was the top most level of the game.

DSS: How was the team atmosphere in South Africa?

EH: Just before the World Cup, we had a successful tour to Namibia winning all the five matches we played. The team spirit was definitely high. But after losing to Canada in the World Cup we were morally down. We were not able to recover from it, and certainly the atmosphere



EHSANUL HAQUE

India out for 190

STAR SPORT DESK

India collapsed to their second successive sub-200 score against South Africa as they succumbed to the hosts' pace battery to be all out for 190 within 48 overs in the second ODI at the New Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg yesterday.

The usual culprits did for the tourists, with left-arm paceman Lonwabo Tsotsobe claiming four and Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel claiming two scalps each.

After a slow start by openers Sachin Tendulkar and Murali Vijay, wickets tumbled at regular intervals. The first three wickets tumbled with the score reading 67, with main man Tendulkar (24) falling to Johan Botha, one of only two wickets not claimed by a spinner, with Virat Kohli being the other, run out for 22.

The only time India looked like posting an adequate total was during the fourth-wicket partnership of 83 between captain MS Dhoni (38) and Yuvraj Singh (53) before Tsotsobe dismissed both batsmen and Suresh Raina (11).

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 190 all out in 47.2 overs (Yuvraj 53, Dhoni 38, Tendulkar 24; Tsotsobe 4-22

'Abahani have no chance'

SPORTS REPORTER

"To tell you the truth, if we can play our normal game, Abahani have no chance of winning" were the words from Mohammedan skipper Shakib Al Hasan, completely ruling out their archrivals in today's high-voltage Premier League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

In reply to Shakib's comments, Abahani coach Khaled Mahmud warned that words wouldn't win them the game. "You have to perform with bat and ball to win a match, not with words. We'll see who performs and wins the match," said the former national captain.

"With due respect to Mohammedan, they are a good team, they have a strong batting side but not that strong bowling unit," he added.

Currently Abahani are leading the table with 16 points, one ahead of the defending champions whose tied game against Prime Doleshwar made sure they remained with 15 points. The team that lost the title to Mohammedan in a thrilling finish last year, Abahani have skipper Mahamudullah Riyad in form.

The right-hander is averaging more than 50 with the bat and with veteran left-arter Mohammad Rafique leading the bowling attack, Abahani is looking forward to win back

Siddikur slides

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman slid to a joint fourth position at the end of the third round of the Gujarat Kensville Challenge with a one-over-par score at the Kensville Golf Club in Ahmedabad yesterday.

This comes on the back of a two-over-par score in the previous round after his brilliant first round score of 5-under-par 67.

India's Gaganjeet Bhullar took a stranglehold lead after racing four shots clear of the chasing pack of the 200,000-euro event.

Brothers halt Russel

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra assumed solo lead of the Grameenphone Bangladesh League despite being held to a 2-2 draw by a spirited Brothers Union at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Table-toppers Russel raced to a 2-0 lead within 41 minutes, but Brothers fought back hard to cancel out the deficit. Brothers hit the woodwork twice but failed to find a winner. This result put Russel on top with 10 points from 4 matches while Brothers have only 3 points with three draws and a defeat.

Brothers coach Wasim Iqbal blamed luck for not being able to win the game

after going so close a couple of times.

"We had a number of chances but could not make the opportunities count. Luck wasn't with us too as we hit the woodwork twice," lamented Wasim.

His opposite number Mahmudul Haque Liton blamed what he called was 'partisan refereeing' for dropping their first point in the league.

"We can understand if referees make mistakes, but when they make blatant decisions against one team, we are helpless."

The match started at a brisk pace and it remained an entertaining one throughout. Sheikh Russel had the early momentum and took the lead in the 32nd minute when Mohammad Yousuf found himself unmarked in front of the goal for an easy finish. The goal

ensured from a powerful shot from Emrul Hassan, which was saved at the goalline by defender Tofazzel Hossain but it fell kindly to Yousuf to open the account. And it looked like game, set and match for Russel when Moroccan striker Chahrouf Youssef, while trying to keep his balance, conjured up a sublime chip from 25 yards that sailed over the opposition goalkeeper into the net.

But kudos to the men in orange, they did not give up, rather stepping up the attack. That pressure paid dividends when Brothers' Cameroonian striker scored in the injury time of the first half to reduce the margin.

The goal perhaps gave Brothers the impetus to fight and they equalised through substitute Mehedi Hasan 19 minutes into the second half.

| POINTS TABLE | M | W | L | T | Pts |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Abahani | 9 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 16 |
| MSC | 9 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Gazi | 9 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 14 |
| Biman | 9 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| Kalabagan | 9 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| DOHS | 9 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 12 |
| CCS | 9 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 10 |
| Victoria | 9 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 8 |
| Surjo Tarun | 9 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| BKSP | 9 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 4 |
| Orient | 9 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 2 |

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